

Truth B-P Church
Sunday Weekly Supplement – 2 April 2017

By decision of the Board of Elders, our Session Election will be held on 8 April 2017 (Saturday). All members are urged to pray, and study today's bulletin. Once every two years, we elect leaders for the church to watch over the souls of God's people. It is an important spiritual exercise and must be done with much prayer and preparation. To do so without soberness and watchfulness will lead to God's withholding His blessing upon us. It is therefore important, for every responsible church member and leader to have a sound and spiritual understanding of this matter.

1. ELECTION OF THE CHURCH SESSION

It must be the best men and women to be elected into the Church Session. They must be best in regards to spiritual maturity, godliness and faithfulness in all aspects including their family and work matters. Unqualified men and women will lead the church astray and become tools for Satan to destroy the unity of the church. The basis for the standard for each Session must be measured against the Holy Scriptures. The failure to do so is to incur the wrath of God.

Candidates for election should therefore be most carefully scrutinized by the Board of Elders so that only those with the necessary spiritual qualifications are nominated. All Church members are encouraged to pray earnestly for God's leading, so that the elected Session will be His instruments to feed the church faithfully.

The process of Election to Session is clearly defined in the Church Constitution. All are advised to study the relevant sections. Please pray that everything will be done "*decently and in order*" (1 Cor 14:40) and to the glory of God.

2. FUNCTIONS OF SESSION

It is important for the church to understand the functions of how the session is to work. The functions of Session are as follows:

- a. To maintain a faithful witness of all spiritual activities including the Church Public Worship, Prayer Meeting and the administration of the Sacraments, namely Water Baptism and Lord's Supper.
- b. To watch over God's flock in order to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim 4:2b), that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- c. To fulfill the Great Commission as a church, to "preach the Word in season, out of season" (2 Tim 4:2) for the salvation of souls and to the edification of the saints.
- d. To "*earnestly contend for the faith*" (Jude 3) in these perilous times, and be found faithful unto the Lord till He returns.
- e. To keep the peace and unity of the Church according to the truth of God's Word.

Let the church be mindful of the above functions in prayer and support of the church session that each session member and as a whole, they may fulfill God's purpose faithfully to the end.

3. QUALIFICATIONS OF CANDIDATES FOR SESSION

It is needful for every member of the congregation to study carefully Article 12 of our Constitution on "Elections." The following is taken from Article 12.3.

Candidates shall satisfy the requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5. Additionally, and to ensure better objectivity in selection, they shall fulfil the following conditions:

- 12.3.1 Demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt, and over a sufficient length of time, that they are faithful and mature members of the Body of Christ and faithfully devote themselves to personal prayer and study of the Word.
- 12.3.2 Attend public worship and prayer meetings of the Church regularly, unless prevented from doing so by valid reasons.
- 12.3.3 Make a careful study of the Constitution, in particular the Principle and Practice of Biblical Separation, and fully accept it.
- 12.3.4 Be willing to participate wholeheartedly in the ministry of the Church with the Pastor, and to devote time, talents and resources in such ministry, including serving in various departments of the Church.

4. ACCORDING TO GOD'S STANDARD – THE WORD OF GOD

Many elders and deacons believed they are called into their offices mainly because they have certain leadership qualities recognized by the church. Some of them may have achieved good success in their secular profession. But it would be a great mistake if they were to serve in the church the same way they did in the world. To the world, it is the result that determines if it is a success or not. They don't care how one does it (though legally) as long as the desired result is accomplished. But it is different for the Lord's ministry. According to Wayne Grudem in his book "Systematic Theology" wrote concerning the selection of elders,

'Those who are choosing elders in churches today would do well to look carefully at candidates in the light of these qualifications, and to look for those character traits and patterns of godly living rather than worldly achievement, fame, or success. Especially in churches in western industrial societies, there seems to be a tendency to think that success in the world of business (or law, or medicine, or government) is an indication of suitability for the office of elder, but this is not the teaching of the New Testament.'

The church must ensure the election of elders and deacons be according to God's standard which is the Word of God. After elected into office, elected elders and deacons must know their own role and responsibility listed in the Word of God. Not only that, they must also know each other's role and responsibility. If not, they might get confused and likely to cause contention in their service. It is possible that the elders are doing the work of the deacons and deacons doing the work of the elders simply because they do not know their own role and each other's responsibility.

5. BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP

Purpose of Elders

Why did God give elders/ pastors to the church? Apostle Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 10:8, "*For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed.*" Apostle Paul states that his authority was given him for the purpose of "edification." This verse states that the purpose of pastors-teachers is to perfect or equip the saints. He teaches the same thing also in Ephesians 4:12, "*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*" Pastors/ elders are to equip the saints who, in turn, are responsible for the work of the ministry and the building up of the body. In other words, their purpose is to teach and apply the Word of God to the lives of believers and so equip them to serve and build up the church themselves. Through the equipping of the elders, the members of the body are ministered, bringing it to the "*unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*" (verse 13).

This ministry of edification is consistent with his command to young Timothy, "*the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*" (2 Timothy 2:2). It is the elders' responsibility to teach and train others for the Lord's ministry. In Titus 2, Apostle Paul instructs Titus in this way also. Titus is exhorted to teach (verse 1) in order every man and woman in the church will be able to minister, in turn, to others (verses 2-5). The duty of elders is to teach and train others to minister for Christ.

Specific Roles of Elders

The duties of elders are basically two: ruling and teaching. The New Testament contains many specific instructions and commands (both by precept and by example) to pastors/ elders concerning the fulfilling of their ministry. In Acts 6:4, the apostles give matters of lesser concern to others so that they may give themselves "to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." This verse teaches the importance of the prayer ministry that the elders are involved in. But why prayer is deemed so important as part of the elder's ministry? Douglas Wilson in his book "Mother Kirk" says, 'The truth is a very simple one; talking to men about God must always be accompanied by talking to God about men.' Elders must devote themselves not only to God's Word but also prayer.

Elders must be apt to teach. According to Acts 20:20, elders are responsible for both pulpit (public) and home (private) teaching. Elders are to contend for the faith, refuting and rebuking false teachers (1 Timothy 1:18; Jude 3; Titus 1:9-16). Elders are to guard the church from errors and sins, both from within and without (Acts 20:28-31; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Timothy 4:16). Elders are to exhort (Titus 1:9; 2 Timothy 4:2), which combines all the ideas of encouragement, comfort, persuasion, counseling, teaching, rebuking, etc. Elders are to rule (1 Peter 5:1-2; 1 Timothy 5:17) and lead by precept and example (1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 5:3).

Evaluation

Elders are to rule and teach God's Word faithfully. And besides these two main responsibilities of ruling and teaching, elders are also involved in other works in the pastoral ministry such as home visitations, praying for the sick, counseling, etc. The elders are to give themselves to prayer and studying of God's Word in order that their ministry will be effective

and efficient for the spiritual good of God's people. What we need today are elders who love the Word and give their whole life to the teaching of the whole counsel of God.

6. BIBLICAL DIACONATE

Purpose of Deacons

Why did God give deacons to the church? The biblical account is clear on the first implementation of deaconship in the church setup: *“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business”* Acts 6:1-3.

The office of deacon was established to free the Apostles (who functioned as the first pastors/ elders) to pray and to minister the Word. The Apostles, in dealing with the physical concern of the Jerusalem church, told the congregation that, *“It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word”* Acts 6:2-4.

Evaluation

Deacons are to be useful for the Lord's service, always available to assist whenever the pastors/ elders would need them. Even though deacons do not govern the church nor do they possess any authority to make decision for the church as this belongs only to the elected elders, the standard for one to stand for deaconship is in no way to be despised. God looks for faithful men who are godly and have great love for Him and His people, to meet all the requirements and qualifications of deacons according to 1 Timothy 3 and Acts 6.

7. DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ROLES OF ELDERS AND THOSE OF DEACONS

Elders are put in charge of every matter of the church including both spiritual and physical aspects. Deacons are to relieve the elders of the physical aspects so that they may focus and concentrate on the spiritual aspects. This does not mean therefore the elders are no more responsible for the physical matters. They are still responsible. It is only that they have the deacons to assist them to take care of the physical matters.

Even though both elders and deacons are regarded as church leaders serving in the church session, however only the elders have the authority to govern the church in all matters. All decision making is done by the elders. The deacons can be invited to give their opinion but ultimately the decision lies with the elders alone. In other words, it is the decision of the elders that count. That made their role all the more important because of the heavy responsibility for the oversight of the whole church.

8. PREPARING FOR ELECTION

The B-P practice of the election of Session is implemented in two stages: a) Nomination, b) Voting. Nomination is essentially the responsibility of the Board of Elders who observe over a period of years those who are spiritual, honest, of good moral behaviour, well versed in the Word, men of prayer, of good Christian witness, and able to relate well with others. *“Novices”* are to be avoided (1 Tim 3:6) in case they may become *“puffed up”* with pride.

The list of candidates deemed worthy in the esteem of the Board of Elders will be announced next week. The general membership will then be able to assess more closely each candidate, how each one has contributed toward the advancement of God's Kingdom. Canvassing for votes is not practised or condoned. Much prayer for wisdom is encouraged. We need Holy Spirit illumination and discernment so that members may cast their votes correctly and the right persons may be chosen to lead the church in the biblical direction.

May God bless us with a God-fearing Session in these last days. Amen.

Yours in Christ,
Rev Dennis Kwok
Pastor